



# Baucus supports EPA nominee after getting Libby commitment

*Senator votes for Leavitt after receiving assurances Libby asbestos cleanup will be EPA priority*

Montana Senator Max Baucus put his support behind Mike Leavitt Oct. 15 to head the Environmental Protection Agency after receiving a commitment that the former Utah governor, if confirmed, will visit Libby personally and help the town recover from asbestos exposure.

Baucus earlier had requested Leavitt visit Libby and put cleaning up the northwest Montana town as a top EPA priority. But citing "vague and unacceptable" responses to his request, Baucus joined other Democratic lawmakers in delaying an Oct. 1 committee vote on Leavitt's nomination.

Leavitt won Baucus' vote as the Environment and Public Works Committee approved the nomination 16-2, by agreeing to the senator's request to help Libby.

"My understanding is that the Libby cleanup is a high priority for the EPA," Leavitt wrote to Baucus. "I support continued priority attention to an effective and efficient cleanup ... If confirmed, I will visit Libby, Mont., as soon as possible."



Mike Leavitt



Max Baucus

Baucus said the EPA has only completed 10 percent of asbestos cleanup activities needed as a result of the W.R. Grace & Co. vermiculite mine, which operated until 1990 and exposed thousands of Libby residents to deadly tremolite asbestos fibers.

"The EPA has been in Libby for over three years and we are still 90 percent away from getting the town a clean bill of health," Baucus said. "The folks

in Libby have been through enough. I just wanted to make sure Mr. Leavitt understands how important long term health care and cleanup efforts are to me personally and the town of Libby. Mr. Leavitt needs to see with his own eyes how asbestos has hurt the folks in Libby. I'm glad he realized how important this is to Montana, and now I'll support his confirmation in the

*Oct 22*

THE MONTANIAN

Libby MT 59923

Wednesday

OCT 22 2003

Superior Clipping Service

Glendive MT 406-377-6612

## EPA

(from page 1)

Senate."

President Bush tapped Leavitt as nominee for administrator of the EPA after former New Jersey

Gov. Christine Todd-Whitman quit the post earlier this year. All top-level presidential appointments must be confirmed by the Senate.

Since the winter of 1999, Baucus has personally visited Libby 13 times and has secured millions of federal dollars to help with cleanup and health care efforts.

Baucus is also working to ensure Libby residents get fair compensation under new asbestos litigation reform legislation pending in Congress.

The Leavitt nomination now goes to the floor of the U.S. Senate for consideration.